

Town Meeting Coordinating Committee

Meeting of Tuesday, June 15, 2010

Bangs Community Center, Glass Room

Attendance: Peggy Roberts, Nonny Burack, Adrienne Terrizzi, Rob Crowner, Harry Brooks, Mary Streeter, Carol Gray (arrived 5:51).

1. Call to order: Peggy calls the meeting to order at 4:36.

2. Election of officers: The following members were elected to serve in the offices noted for the upcoming year: Peggy (chair), Mary (vice-chair), Rob (secretary), and Nonny (stacker). Votes for each were five in favor, none opposed, with the candidate abstaining.

3. Electronic voting survey: Mary, Adrienne, and Rob present the draft of a report on the electronic voting survey conducted by TMCC. Rob summarizes the findings as tentative support for electronic voting with a need to nail down real costs before proceeding. The committee reviews and discusses the report, suggesting several adjustments for a final version. Rob will revise and distribute before the next meeting.

Peggy states that the experience of the demonstration probably influenced the survey results and so there should be another before Town Meeting is asked to adopt electronic voting. Mary states that an effort should be made to survey all members of Town Meeting the next time. Rob states that the wording of the survey made it difficult to draw conclusions with confidence; more care should be taken in designing a new survey.

Adrienne states that while the raw data suggest support, the comments indicate that TM had many concerns and was not ready to adopt electronic voting at this time, and Rob questions whether it would be useful to work on a bylaw amendment before it is clear whether a recommendation to adopt electronic voting will be made. However, Harry proposes working on the bylaw as a way of addressing some of the concerns raised in the report. Mary suggests examining whether there are alternate ways of clarifying close votes without electronic voting before going to a standing or tally vote.

Mary would like to post the report on the town website and send it to the listserv as soon as possible. Peggy proposes that the committee review the report with the Moderator before releasing it to Town Meeting members. Nonny moves that a "stack" of paper copies be made available in several places in town, such as libraries and town hall and the committee agrees by a vote of 6-0. Only the report itself will be copied; the appendices will be put on reserve along with the other TMCC material.

Adrienne suggests that an interim report on progress in the electronic voting investigation be made to Town Meeting in the Fall. Harry suggests that additional comments and reactions to the survey report be solicited in advance of the interim report.

3a. Response to Alan Reiss: Mary requests that the committee acknowledge Mr. Reiss's offer to discuss electronic voting with us. Peggy notes that Mr. Reiss's community, Wayland, has an open Town Meeting, and so the circumstances of his interest in electronic voting are a little different from Amherst's. There has also been a feeler from Framingham, via Kris Pacunas. In response to a question from Adrienne, Harry states that while there may be a limited rental market for the receiver and software, it is unlikely that handsets would be available for rental due to the complications of keeping track of and maintaining them. After further discussion, the committee agrees to ask Mary to contact Mr. Reiss to update him on developments in Amherst. If he is interested, a copy of the report will be emailed to him when it is finished.

4. Committee minutes discussion: Adrienne would like to be able to deal with corrections to minutes outside of the meeting, with consideration of minutes in meeting limited to approval or disapproval as a way of saving time. Noting that the committee sometimes gets sidetracked by items in the minutes, Mary suggests putting consideration of minutes at the end of the meeting. Peggy states that members should read minutes in advance of the meeting, but that comments may be sent only to town staff (when relevant), not committee members. Mary agrees to look into whether the new Open Meeting Law allows any flexibility in this matter. Adrienne observes that the committee's minutes usually contain more than is required by law, and Mary explains that this has been the committee's practice in order to provide better context to those who might not have been present at the meeting.

5. Minutes of June 9 meeting: Harry moves, Nonny seconds, and the committee approves the minutes of June 9, 2010 with minor amendments.

6. Summer projects and schedule: Adrienne reports that when the Town Room was rewired, it was funded through ACTV's contract with Comcast. She proposes meeting with Jim Lescault and Kris Pacunas to discuss that nature of the sound problems in the Middle School auditorium and whether anything can be done about it. Harry offers to assist and the committee agrees to delegate this task to them.

The committee agrees to try to schedule a meeting with the Town Moderator before the end of the month, and then to not meet again until August 12. Future meetings may require a different location (with wireless capability) in order to permit Carol's participation via Skype.

Adrienne suggests holding an informational forum on Town Meeting itself, ideally in advance of the town election.

Carol requests that a list of all past fora be posted on the TMCC webpage, with links to ACTV for those that are available for viewing on demand over the internet.

The committee agrees to authorize Carol to begin planning a forum on "greening Amherst", including environmental initiatives and potential cost savings. Adrienne will pick up the reins when Carol is away.

7. Adjournment: The meeting is adjourned at 6:34.

Respectfully submitted,
Rob Crowner

Documents distributed at the meeting:

1. agenda
2. draft minutes of 6/9 meeting
3. Alan Reiss email
4. draft electronic voting survey report